

typical of the officialism of that period, continued to make 'appropriations' of rectories to any religious house which they wished to endow.¹ They had indeed little interest in attacking the system, for many parish churches were appropriated to cathedral clergy, especially to prebendal stalls. But to Wycliffe, always the friend of the parson as against either prelate or monk, the system seemed abomination; so the Lollards took up the cause. * They have parish churches apropered to worldly rich bishops and abbots that have many thousand marks more than enow And yet they do

not the office of curates, neither in teaching or preaching or giving of sacraments, nor of receiving of poor men in the parish : but set (ten) an idiot for vicar or parish priest, that can not and may not do the office of a good curate, and yet the poor parish findeth him.^{1 2}

The inadequate stipends of many parsons, reduced by 'appropriations' and by bad times, caused many of the less faithful to desert their ill-paid duties. 'It has come to our ears,' wrote Archbishop Sudbury, 'that rectors of our diocese scorn to keep due residence in their churches, and go to dwell in distant and perhaps dishonest places, without our license, and let their churches out to farm to persons less fitted. Lay persons with their wives and children sometimes dwell in their rectories, frequently keeping taverns and other foul and dishonest things in them.'³ Although the Primate complained when this was done without his license, such licenses to let out the rectory to farm were easily obtained from the Bishops.⁴ To regard the cure of souls as a source of income only, was then recognised and even authorised. Many parsons, without leaving a vicar in charge, deserted their dull round of duties among an ignorant and half-savage peasantry, to live in the great cities or the mansions of the nobility. Here it was not hard for them to get employment as chantry priests to sing private masses ; with the money earned for such easier tasks they eked out the pittance received for parish duties which they were neglecting. As Langland wrote:—

¹ See Ap. 223, 836. • 8. E. W. iii. 215 ; Matt., 97, 116, 190.
 * Wilkins, iii. 120.
 * MS. Calendar of Lambeth Register, Lambeth Library, *passim*.